PIO in Malaysia

†263. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that the People of Indian Origin (PIO) are being neglected and persecuted in Malaysia;

(b) if so, the condition of the families of PIO there, at present; and

(c) the details of steps taken to safeguard economic-cultural rights and interests of the PIO living in Malaysia?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) There is a large community of Persons of Indian Origin in Malaysia who are citizens of that country and are well integrated in the Malaysian society. The population of Malaysian citizens of Indian Origin stands at about 1.9 million, which accounts for about 8% of the total population of Malaysia. Indians are the third largest ethnic group in Malaysia, after Malays and Chinese, Malaysia officially celebrates customs, traditions and religions of its multi-racial population. The people of Indian origin are active in various walks of the Malaysian society, economy and polity, including in the Government, and their rights as Malaysian citizens are also derived from the Malaysian Constitution. Members of Indian community have, however, also articulated their concerns and grievances regarding their standing in the country. Recently, a rally was organized by the Hindu Rights Action Force (HINDRAF) in Kuala Lumpur on 25 November, 2007 with the stated purpose of handing over a petition to the British High Commission in Kuala Lumpur seeking the support of Queen Elizabeth II for a class action suit filed in the UK for the exploitation of Indians who were brought to Malaysia as indentured labour. During this rally as well as subsequently, difficulties and concerns pertaining to economic and social conditions and religious rights of the Indian community in Malaysia have been highlighted.

(c) It may be recalled that in a *sou motu* statement made in Parliament on 30 November, 2007, the Minister of External Affairs referred to concerns expressed by Hon'ble Members of Parliament regarding the alleged harassment of participants of the rally organised by the HINDRAF in Kuala Lumpur on 25 November 2007 and subsequent related matters. The Minister of External Affairs stated that Government remain deeply solicitous for the welfare of People of Indian origin living abroad and noted that there is a large community of People of Indian Origin in Malaysia who are citizens of that country. He added that we have friendly relations with Malaysia and we are in touch with the Malaysian authorities in the related mater. During our interactions with Malaysian authorities, concerns expressed in India, including in the Parliament, regarding developments pertaining to the Indian community in Malaysia have been suitably conveyed.

Achievement of PM's visit to China

264. DR. V. MAITREYAN : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the main reasons for the China visit undertaken by the Prime Minister recently;

(b) the main achievement of the visit;

(c) the main and useful declarations which were signed with the Chinese Government during the visit; and

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.